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STATE ALSO FOR EUR/ERA

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SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF EUROPE: PRIORITIES IN ARMENIA

¶1. (SBU) Several Council of Europe (COE) ambassadors have pointed to COE programs and influence in Armenia as one of the COE's success stories. Our contacts, including the Armenian Ambassador, have highlighted a positive COE role, including the COE's Parliamentary Assembly's (PACE) enhanced monitoring of Armenia until early this year, in influencing Armenian authorities to address several (but not all) issues related to the violence surrounding last year's election. They readily acknowledge that pressure from Brussels, Washington, and other capitals have also helped generate reforms in Yerevan.

¶2. (U) The draft COE Action Plan (drafted in consultation with Armenian authorities) with Armenia for 2009-11 focuses on supporting Yerevan's fulfillment of its COE accession commitments and statutory obligations. Its prioritized areas include:

the functioning of the judiciary

freedom of expression and of the media

electoral legislation and implementation

fight against ill-treatment and impunity

penitentiary reform and the fight against corruption

follow-up to constitutional reform through legal-cooperation.

¶3. (U) The agreement notes that the EU-Armenia Action Plan was adopted under the European Neighborhood Policy in November 2006 to help Armenian meet the targets set by the European Union with the help of Council of Europe expertise, including on strengthening the application of the European Convention on Human Rights at the national level.

¶4. (SBU) The Armenian Ambassador told us recently that the agreement with the COE has not yet received Yerevan's blessing, largely because of disagreements over some definitions of

individual projects. He noted that the agreement should include 8.1 million Euros for financing. Some of the budget will come from the COE, some (including almost all of the 4.1 million Euros for an "Access to justice" project) from joint programs with the EU, and some from voluntary contributions.

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